
CHAPTER 7

SCOPING REPORT

The planning team values the role of public input in the planning process. To maximize public involvement we have added opportunities beyond the scoping requirements found in the Federal Land Policy and Management and National Environmental Policy Acts.

The Planning Team has pursued several additional avenues to help encourage public participation during the development of the Resource Management Plan. We have hosted several, more formal, public involvement processes including public meetings and social and economic workshops; the team has also invited input and feedback through less formal means such as mail, e-mail, phone conversations and personal interactions. These venues are intended to invite public participation and obtain valuable feedback which can then be used to frame the planning process – to focus on topics of concern; to identify various solutions, guidance and direction; and to determine the extent of analysis required to reach an informed decision.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The Planning Team has invited public interaction through a variety of venues:

An electronic mailbox has been set up which can be accessed at any time to provide comments, concerns and feedback:

John_Day_Basin_RMP@or.blm.gov

Letters and other mailings can be sent at any time to:

John Day Basin RMP
Prineville BLM
3050 NE 3rd Street
Prineville, OR 97754

The BLM contracted the expertise of sociologists and anthropologists (James Kent Associates) to spend time in the planning area visiting with local officials, business owners, travelers and residents in order to gather information on BLM land management concerns.

The BLM co-hosted, with the help of Wheeler County and the cities of John Day and Canyon City, several Economic Profile Workshops in the planning area, with the intent to explore economic and social trends within the area

The BLM hosted a series of meetings open to the public throughout eastern, central and western Oregon, to gather public input and feedback on concerns and problems with BLM management in the planning area

The BLM, in conjunction with several other governmental authorities – including: Grant, Wheeler and Sherman counties, the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon, US Fish and Wildlife Service, NOAA Fisheries, Environmental Protection Agency, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and Parks and Recreation – has established a Cooperating Agencies group to provide input and feedback to BLM throughout the process.

To date the BLM has received feedback through all of these venues with the James Kent Associates work, Economic Profile Workshops and BLM Public Meetings/letters and e-mails providing the bulk of the feedback that has been received. The findings from each of these venues are described in the following pages.

JAMES KENT ASSOCIATES

James Kent Associates (JKA) was hired to sample viewpoints and opinions about the role of public lands in the basin. The fieldwork took place in Grant, Wheeler, Sherman, Gilliam, and Morrow Counties. This work was designed to provide the BLM with an understanding of how public land management affects citizens and their communities, identifying concerns about public land management, identifying current social and economic conditions, and identifying opportunities for greater community dialogue about alternatives for future management of public lands.

The key findings were grouped according to community life, natural resource management and citizen interests. In addition to these findings the report also recommends communication strategies for each geographic area based on coaching by local residents about the best time and place for meetings, key people to involve, and appropriate methods of local communication. Generally speaking, residents appreciate personal connection and want a planning process that builds off of local interests and includes national interests in a positive manner. Residents generally favor an approach that eschews the radical fringes of thought and builds a practical, moderate course of action for future BLM management.

Community Life:

Population in four of the five counties has declined or has remained the same over the last fifteen years, while Morrow County, by virtue of its Columbia River location, increased population substantially. No clear trend was identified with rates of poverty, although per capita income has dropped in real terms throughout most of the region. The population is older than the state or national average. Hispanics have notably increased in Morrow County, while only modestly increased in other areas.

The traditional economic sectors of timber, ranching, farming and mining, have slowly declined over the last 30 years in terms of income and employment generated in these counties. Like other areas of the state and nation, the economic growth has occurred in trades and services, particularly professional and business services, reflecting the retirement and recreation basis of these sectors.

County and local leadership has been active in fostering efforts at economic diversification with some successes, notably, wind energy development in Sherman County, Painted Hills Beef and the development of paleontological resources in Wheeler County, an OHV Park in Morrow County, and a broadening of service and recreation oriented businesses in Grant County.

Settlement patterns are changing, as long-time ranches are bought by wealthier urbanites, who often purchase for recreation purposes, and who are seen by other residents as improving environmental conditions but not adding much to community life. Residents report that new settlement is from the "Bend spillover," from California, and from the coast. A short supply of housing reported by residents is seen to be leading to higher housing prices.

Natural Resource Management:

Although throughout the region there is a sense that government cannot be trusted, personal relationships between BLM personnel and residents tend to be very good, particularly with BLM's "traditional publics" of ranchers, farmers, and the timber industry.

Communication between BLM and the "average" citizen is generally perceived to be low. Most people simply do not know what BLM is doing and many expressed appreciation of BLM's outreach effort through James Kent Associates.

Awareness of BLM lands tends to be high among the traditional sectors and elected officials, but low among the general public. Related to this is a general, widespread confusion of people about whose land one might be on at any given moment. The desire for accurate maps and better information was one of the most widespread citizen issues in the John Day River Basin.

The most widespread citizen issue was the loss of access to public lands. People want the new plan to anticipate the locations of future access loss and work with them to preserve access in the future, or to re-acquire access to areas recently lost. High interest was expressed in partnering with local counties to undertake joint transportation planning and working together to foster greater access to public lands in the future.

The process by which individual BLM parcels are purchased or Recreation and Public Purpose leases are obtained is not well understood and is of key interest. There is a strong perception of agency inaction on this issue.

Residents want to be part of the management planning process for the newly acquired lands on the North Fork of the John Day River. They are interested in fishing and hunting, fire and forest management, fencing, access, roads, gates, noxious weeds, "wild and scenic" designations, business development, and maps, and generally favor multiple uses.

Although people remain skeptical that a recreation economy can ever replace a ranching and timber economy, new recreation-related businesses and their promotion are of central interest. Shooting ranges, OHV riding areas, winter recreation, and managing hunting effects are some of the interests.

Residents in Sherman and Gilliam Counties are most interested in the recreation management of the John Day River, specifically the management of floaters, optimizing the economic benefits of river recreation, stewardship contracting for management of recreation opportunities, as well as promoting continued access to BLM lands near the river.

Other specific issues related to public land management that were less widespread and more relegated to particular publics include grazing, the timber programs, fire suppression programs (Sherman and Gilliam Counties), and support for youth.

Residents believe there is a trend toward hunting only for the rich. They respect the right of ranchers to diversify their income sources through fee hunting, but lament the loss of hunting opportunities through lack of traditional access to private lands. Observers expect the demand for hunting on public lands to increase.

Citizen Interests:

Access. Although many residents couched their concerns about access as if it was BLM's responsibility, many indicated a willingness to contribute to solutions and felt that a community-based planning process could widen the resources available to address the problem and accomplish more than if BLM addressed the issue only "in house."

Little Canyon Mountain. The success of the Little Canyon Mountain clean up generated ample "social capital" with which to undertake the next step in management planning for this area that could accommodate multiple uses. The nearby communities in this area appear to have capacity to contribute in positive ways to the ongoing management of this area.

John Day River Management. Many people believe that requiring permits for floating the John Day River is inevitable in order to manage the impacts, and want to participate to minimize necessary regulation and optimize community benefits.

Economic Development. The role of BLM lands and their management in fostering needed economic development has been appreciated by residents and many advised that an even more concerted focus on this topic in the new land use plan is warranted, particularly related to the promotion of paleontological resources and recreation-oriented business, including the provision of BLM maps and information that would help in orienting visitors to the attractions of the area.

ECONOMIC PROFILE WORKSHOPS

In cooperation with Wheeler County and the cities of John Day and Canyon City, the BLM co-hosted two Economic Profile Workshops – one in Fossil, Oregon and another in John Day, Oregon. Both of these workshops were well attended by a wide variety of local officials, business owners, and residents.

Each workshop began by identifying objectives from the participants. The Sonoran Institute facilitated the discussions – a major component of each workshop related to identifying current trends and discussing how BLM fits into those trends. The following is a short description of some of these trends and opportunities that were identified in each workshop.

Fossil Workshop:

The new availability of limited medical facilities has had a noticeable effect on the stability and is a huge asset to the community.

Painted Hills Beef does a great job of marketing via internet and they are doing very well.

Ranches are being sold and limiting access to BLM property.

It's been difficult to convince the older residents that we have to plan for growth.

There is something about this area that draws people in and keeps them coming back. Wheeler & Gilliam counties have an opportunity to shape the growth towards how they want to look in the future.

The education system has drastically changed because we have no students. We have a declining enrollment from 218 in '92 to 120 now. That is happening in every school.

We need to throw out some old thinking and create some new thinking. We can't wait for the growth to happen-we need to change some of the zoning rules. We need to have mixed use zoning in the downtown district in these towns.

There's been a real increase in popularity in the river. The Park Service has always been a draw; there's lot of opportunities for the BLM to play a part in the public lands setting/ draw to the area.

When we have festivals, we don't have any place to park, house or feed visitors. I'm hoping we could get some assistance via State or BLM properties.

John Day Workshop:

The largest number of firms in Grant County are in construction and there seems to be a trend for that to increase. If you want a new house built in Grant County, there is a waiting list for up to two years.

There are two major trends in the Monument area; one is the purchase of large tracts of trophy hunting lands by absentee landowners and there is the dying of the schools associated with young families leaving because they cannot find employment or the services are too marginal. The retirees are temporary, they last about 5 years when they realize how far it is to a hospital and they leave.

Recreation opportunities are deteriorating as the forests deteriorate, due to the lack of management.

Since 1990, one-third of the employment base has disappeared; school & county population has dropped off; this directly correlates to drop off in timber sales with FS.

Finding dependable employees within the community is really hard. Problem of small business is the lack of employees that are willing to work and can pass a drug test. People quit good paying jobs because they can't guarantee having time off for hunting season. People don't necessarily want to work 9-5 work weeks.

The lumber industry is going down. It was the traditional industry-that is no longer true. In the mining industry, the dredges used to work here and now there is no mining. We need tourism but we need some mainstay employment and medium paying jobs. Mills are down to one shift. At the height of the lumber industry, there were 1,500 people employed-that's gone.

Grant County has one of the only active sawmills that exist in Eastern Oregon.

Driving force is retirees, people with money from elsewhere, social programs, spending money on recreation properties, retiree's investment.

The timber thinning that people have been talking about is an ecological service that is important. I think there are other opportunities for ecological services that could be generated in the future. The BLM should look at that-such as native plant materials, ecological monitoring, planning and mapping services, weed control.

PUBLIC RESPONSE VIA BLM MEETINGS, LETTERS AND COMMENTS

In February 2005 a Notice of Intent to complete a Resource Management Plan was published in the Federal Register. This initiated a 30 day public comment period during which the BLM directly contacted over 2500 individuals that have expressed interest in public lands management in the planning area. The BLM also published numerous announcements across Oregon through various news media. In response the BLM received numerous letters, e-mails, phone calls and other comments and hosted several public meetings. The intent of the scoping and public comment period is to invite and solicit information from groups or individuals interested in management of the public lands in the planning area.

During this timeframe the BLM received over 270 individual responses in the form of letters, e-mails, phone calls and public meetings. These responses contained over 1200 distinct and substantive comments that have been identified. Most of the letters received originated in the John Day area with a significant number of responses coming from the Portland/Hillsboro/Forest Grove area.

The BLM also hosted five public meetings in: Fossil, John Day, Pendleton, Bend and Forest Grove. These meetings were relatively well attended ranging from 10 attendees in Pendleton to 51 attendees in John Day.

Many responses were made on behalf of an organization. Table 18 displays the organization type as noted in the responses received.

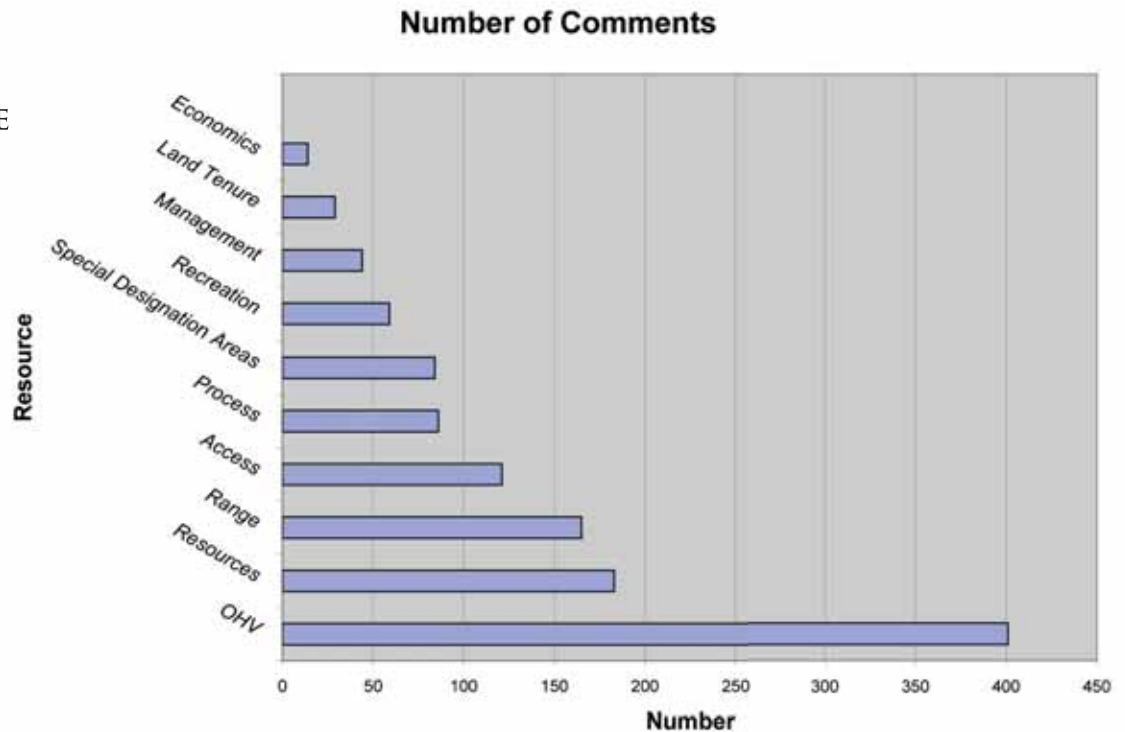
Comments received during this process were received either via responses mailed, phoned, faxed or e-mailed, or responses given at a public meeting.

Each comment was reviewed to determine the public land resource, process or topic to which it referred. Figure 40 displays the total number of comments received in particular resource categories. Most groupings are self explanatory – however Management refers to general public land management and Resources includes comments regarding most public land resources from soils to fish and wildlife and vegetation.

Table 18: Number of Comments Received by Organization Identification

Organization Type	Number of Comments
Individual (none identified)	455
Preservation/Conservation	338
Federal Agency	32
Wood Products Industry	13
Recreational	6
Public Meetings (comment source not identified)	345

**FIGURE 40:
NUMBER OF
COMMENTS
BY RESOURCE
CATEGORY**



The BLM received more comments regarding off-highway vehicle use than any other grouping and nearly as many as all the other groupings put together. While these OHV concerns spanned the entire planning area most were directed at the Little Canyon Mountain area just outside of Canyon City. The attention given this particular area prompted the BLM to hold a separate public meeting to fully explore the nature of concerns that are involved in the management of this area.

Other concerns include management of the North Fork John Day area for all public land resources including vegetation, recreation, forest management, range management, off-highway vehicle use, wildland and prescribed fire management, access and recreation, and special designation areas such as Wild and Scenic Rivers, Wilderness and Areas of Critical Environmental Concern.

Range management as well as special designation areas were identified as areas of concern throughout other areas within the planning boundary. General public lands management, the land use planning process and land tenure adjustments also received some attention in the public comments.

PRELIMINARY ISSUES

Based on the Key Findings of the Analysis of the Management Situation and input from the public, other governments and tribes we have identified several Planning Issues. The Planning Issues may be revised or refined as a result of comments received about the AMS. Planning Issues are problems that require changes in RMP direction to resolve.

An “issue” is defined as a topic of controversy, dispute or concern over resource management activities or land uses within the planning area boundary. In order to be considered “significant” by the agency, an issue must be well defined, relevant to the proposed action(s) in question, and within the authority and ability of the agency to address in the development of a reasonable range of alternatives or mitigation measures. The agency must consider the issue in the environmental analysis of the various alternatives.

The following Planning Issues will be utilized to develop management guidance alternatives for the planning area. These alternatives, along with a description of the environmental consequences implementation of these alternatives would have on the public lands will be described in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

WATER RESOURCES

The public expressed concerns over the management of riparian areas:
Management of riparian areas should be consistent according to resources
Cooperative Management Efforts
Water quality efforts should be supported in the RMP

FOREST HEALTH

The public expressed concern regarding the management of timber resources
Management guidance should allow for a range of resource management objectives

FIRE AND FUELS MANAGEMENT

Much of the planning area has missed at least one disturbance event or fire
Current RMP guidance is unclear with respect to management in wildland urban interface areas

PUBLIC LAND ACCESS AND TRAVEL MANAGEMENT

BLM policy requires resource management plans to delineate travel management areas.
The need to identify roads and access to BLM and private lands has been anticipated by the BLM as the result of changes in land status and accessibility
Public concerns include recent reduction in access as the result of closure of routes on BLM lands and adjacent private lands

OFF HIGHWAY VEHICLE USE DESIGNATIONS

Designations are required by BLM policy: either open, limited or closed
The situation has changed since last plans.
The public expressed concern about OHV use in the Little Canyon Mountain Area
Two viewpoints expressed:
Close BLM lands to protect resources
Designate large areas for OHV use to provide recreational opportunities

LAND TENURE ZONING DESIGNATIONS

Under 43 CFR 2400 the BLM is required to identify lands that should be retained, disposed, or acquired to serve the national interest.

Though the John Day, Baker, and Two Rivers RMPs did this the subsequent Oregon Land Exchange Act of 2000 significantly modified land ownership in the John Day Basin creating a need to review and possibly change some land tenure designations. Public concerns include BLM acquisition or disposal of lands in the Rudio Mountain area.

SPECIAL MANAGEMENT AREAS

Wild and Scenic River (WSR) suitability recommendations

Suitability recommendations are required by BLM policy

Public concerns have a wide range:

Include wild and scenic rivers wherever possible to protect resource values

Exclude wild and scenic rivers because they restrict public use

Consider designations to protect specific resource values such as paleontological values

Areas with Wilderness characteristics

Policy concerning wilderness review undergoing revision

Public Concerns have a wide Range:

Protect lands with wilderness characteristics

Do not protect land with wilderness characteristics because it limits multiple use management

MANAGEMENT OF ACQUIRED LANDS IN THE NORTH FORK OF THE JOHN DAY AREA

The Oregon Land Exchange Act of 2000 requires a development of a management plan for acquired lands before multiple uses can be considered.

Guidance for all resources must be provided

Visual Resource Inventory and Designations (Scenic Quality, etc.)

Designations are required by BLM policy

Public concerns include a broad range

All issues described above plus:

Grazing (comments for both pro and con)

